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LOVE-
LETTER
LAYS

SONGS FROM THE HEART

BY ALBERT C. WHITE

The Times Literary Supplement says :

“A kind of blithe vivacity is the prevailing mood . . . due to the pleasant facility with which the writer throws off simple musical verses even when the subjects are serious, always avoiding what is sombre or heavy, and in a lighter vein charming by an unaffected gaiety.”

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LOVE-LETTER LAYS

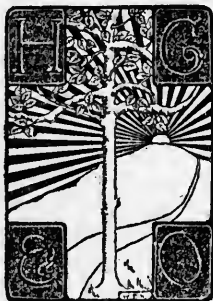
AND SOME OTHERS

BY

ALBERT CLEMENT WHITE

Author of "Songs of a Soul," "Songs from the Heart."

Editor of "A Little Book of Irish
Verse," etc., etc.



LONDON :
HEATH, CRANTON LIMITED
FLEET LANE, E.C.

1916

NOTE

Most of the shorter poems in this book have appeared in periodicals from which I have been given permission to reprint them. "The Seven Dolours of Ireland" first appeared in *A Little Book of Irish Verse*, and is included here by leave of the Publishers (Heath, Cranton Ltd.).

TO GWLADYS

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LOVE-LETTER LAYS

INSPIRATION

I HAD an itch for singing
Poor songs of common things,
But my lyric bird was a fledgling
That could not use its wings.

It made pathetic efforts
To rise from an earthy nest,
And tumbled about ungainly
In its ineffectual quest.

But now it is gaily flying,
Far off from the groundling dust,
For my muse no more rehearses,
I sing because I must.

A TRIBUTE TO LOVE

I SING of Love and all the joy it brings,
I sing perforce, as every lover sings ;
For love makes havoc of life's common rules,
And breaks the spell of ordinary things.

Unloved, unloving, we go on our way,
Doing our work, and grumbling at our pay,
Stuck fast in the inevitable rut
Wherein each day is like each other day.

Even our pleasures give us no delight,
Custom's stiff law usurps the throne of right,
And each unvigorous and futile day
Is followed by an unrefreshing night.

And so through childhood, youth and yellow age,
Loveless we shuffle through life's heritage ;
Until Death's hand the curtain drops, and we
Regretless make our exit from the stage.

Love saves us from this hideous career ;
Robs duty of monotony and fear,
Gives meaning to the meanest tasks we do,
And sheds a softer light on every year.

And so I sing of Love, and if I rise
To levels meaner than my enterprise,
Blame my poor wits, where worthier thought is
formed
And on the threshold of expression dies.

I sing of Love, life's stimulating goal !
The winning of it makes men clean and whole ;
And mean desires are banished in the fire
Of lofty vigour that refines the soul.

No longer do the pleasing things of sense
Drug the dull conscience with their vain pretence;
For Love invests the flesh with sacred awe,
And dooms the beast in man to impotence.

No longer does the hackneyed lie prevail
That they are weak who do not sometimes fail
In constancy ; that the strong lover must
Submit at times when Nature's hosts assail.

For when the lover suffers on the rack
Of passion, he has powers that others lack :
Love steels his will to desperate assault,
And meetly fits his burden to his back.

And thus he grows in elevated might,
Where once he wallowed in the weakling's plight ;
Each struggle nerves him for the next until
He earns the sweet serenity of right.

I sing of Love, not of the frigid ties
That know no peril of inconstancies ;
But of the love that is of sense and soul,
Hot, holy, human love that never dies.

* * *

I sing of Love that makes the world a place
Wherein each spot is a new means of grace ;
Wherein the lover finds where'er he goes
Reflected beauties of his lady's face.

I sing of Love that catches from the Spring
Some of the processes of quickening :
Love is re-born when the first flowers appear,
And spring-birds sound their note of beckoning.

I sing of Love that finds in Summer's glow
A sensuous joy the sensuous never know :
Love that perceives in Nature's rich display,
The glories ripe affection can bestow.

I sing of Love that in the Autumn sees,
In fading flowers and russet-tinted trees,
The mellow peace that comes to crown its age,
The calm succeeding youthful ecstasies.

I sing of Love that in the Winter knows
How soon the sun will melt away the snows ;
How soon the days will lengthen out, how soon
To love-bound hearts the barren season goes.

I sing of Love, the citadel from whence
'Gainst all life's ills man draws his sure defence :
And this my song contains whate'er it lacks—
The grateful tribute of my reverence.

LOVE'S MYSTERY

I CANNOT tell you what it means to me,
This love of ours that never more can fade,
I am enshrouded in its mystery,
And more than half afraid.

There is a strange solemnity that fills
My heart with dazzling hopes and awful fears,
The very joy with which my being thrills,
But skirts the vale of tears.

When love makes glorious riot in my brain,
I long to have you in my arms and kiss
Those love-red lips of yours again ; again
I tremble at my bliss.

I cannot tell you what it means to me,
This love of ours ; but, darling, when your hand
Is clasped in mine and my rapt face you see,
I know you understand.

THE ANSWER

THAT night we went by motor-car to Reading
(A day or two after we first had met),
If you had giv'n the answer I was dreading
And told me to forget :

If you had told me to forget that ever
I was your secret lover for a week,
And that your heart was not for me, and never
Of my swift love to speak ;

I should not now be writing to you daily
Of those fond things the future holds in store,
I should not know the thrilling zest of daily
Labouring for you more.

I should have passed beyond the pale of passion
Into the frigid world of every-day,
And wondered why in such unconscious fashion
You stole my heart away.

But dear, you told me, though no words were
spoken

When you returned the pressure of my hand,
That you were mine : it was a silent token
That love could understand.

My life was yours that night to heal or break it,
A half-dead life mid hope and horror torn ;
My life was yours that night that you might
make it

A resurrection morn.

LOVE'S SILENCE

WE sat in a rapt silence side by side,
Against the flowering hedgerows of a
wood,
And through our hearts there swept the rushing
tide
Of love unspoken and yet understood.

Ah, not alone is eloquence of speech
The vehicle of passion and of troth,
In an enchanted silence love may reach
The height of the irrevocable oath.

What words my dearest ever could express,
The exquisite delights of that glad day,
Better than your eyes' liquid loveliness,
Or that wild kiss that gave my heart away?

LOVE'S IDEAL

LET those make sonnets to their ladies' eyes,
Who love alone the witchery of sense,
Let those red lips be praised in melodies,
That are too red for nobler eloquence :
But I will not indite my ardent lays
To my love's form, though beauteous it be,
I hail what is too lofty for my praise,
The loveliness that is her purity.

Through my love's eyes there beams the light
that glows
Resplendent on the altar of the soul,
I kneel in that high presence and there flows
Through me a healing stream to make me
whole :
I love her body, for it is the host
Of those chaste ardours that ennoble me,
I love her soul—but oh, I love her most
Because she is what I can never be.

Ah me! the yoke of youth endures so long
To taunt me that I was inquisitive,
I gave my ear to passion's strident song,
And weakly thought to revel was to live :
Now are those days and nights of aimless joy,
The livid ghost that haunts my memory,
Whose mocking shade I struggle to destroy
In vain, for still it hovers over me.

Day after day and hour by hour I seek,
Freedom from all the tarnish of the past ;
I struggle on towards that towering peak
Of pure desire whereon my eyes are cast :
And I shall reach it with my true love's aid
She gives unceasing and unconsciously,
And one glad day I shall not be afraid
Because she is what I can never be.

A WALK IN THE WIND

WHEN the wind played with your hair,
And sported with my hat,
We walked along without a care,
And laughed thereat.

When we came over the hill,
And rain began to fall,
It did not damp that ardent will
Of ours at all.

That ardent will that we had,
To revel in that day,
For we knew why we were so glad
And dared not say.

And the wind played with my hat,
And sported with your hair,
But we walked along and laughed thereat
Without a care.

A WALK IN THE WOOD

WE wandered through the wood to-day,
(And the wood is fine to view) ;
But I had no eyes for the flowers of May,
My eyes were all for you.

I plucked some flowers as we went,—
Blue-bells and violets too,
But I plucked them not for their sight or scent,
But just to give to you.

The air was full of the music
Of birds ; but I rejoice
That I had no ear for a sound to-day,
But the music of your voice.

We wandered through the wood to-day,
(And the wood is fine to view) ;
But my eyes, and my ears, and my mind were
closed
To the whole wide world but you.

ELEVATION

HOW can I write of that which is to me
Sacred beyond all thought I can express ?
Who can describe the subtle happiness
Of love ; or paint in words its mystery ?

I only know that in my heart there is
A solemn joy that crushes evil things,
And that the love I bear you ever brings
A ready spur to moral energies.

Life is no longer an unfruitful chase
Of hopes that fail 'mid clashing destinies ;
I read its potent meaning in your eyes,
And find its glad fruition in your face.

THE SEARCH

I SOUGHT for peace, for something that
should make

Melody in the discord of my life :

I longed some rôle to fill, some part to take
That I might lose the sense of inward strife
That weakened me, and made me look with sad
Despairing eyes upon the living world,
Wherein it seemed no staple place I had.

I was buffeted, purposelessly hurled
By powers I knew not back upon myself,
Until the nights of restlessness, the days
Bereft alike of happiness and health
Goaded me to make war upon my fate.

I said : " I will search out until I find
Some barrier 'gainst the tempest of self-hate,
Some shelter from the bludgeonings of mind."

I sought in all accustomed ways my goal :
Churches held out their arms to me, and said :
" We offer sweet refreshment for the soul,
Hope for the living, heaven for the dead."

I found no balm in any of their creeds,
Nor satisfaction for my spirit's needs.

One place I entered was a mission-hall ;
It was a cold and howling wilderness
Of pitch-pine seats, and lurid texts that hung
From wooden scrolls upon each wooden wall.

There came a minister, sleek, smiling, fat,
To whom ungraciously I made complaint,
Who clasped his hands and deeply sighed thereat,
Driving from me my remnant of restraint.
A well-paid trafficker in platitudes
He had no faith and therefore had no doubt :
What knew he of the broken heart that broods
Over life's plan and cannot make it out ?
Ah, they were all the same, these pious men,
Robbed of their manhood by their piety,
And I soon learned to put no faith in them
And all their devious divinity.

I sought again, wandering aimlessly,
Keeping no mental guard over my feet,
But going where they chanced to carry me,
Dogged by a drear prevision of defeat.

I moved among the leaders of the day,
Explored the murky world of politics,
Wherein men serve their fellows—for the pay
That falls to those who best can play its tricks.
I found here many men who once were poor,
Self-sacrificing workers for their kind,
Now, all their houses had a " tradesmen's " door,
And all their wives were " ladies," being blind
To the contempt of those from whom they came,
And the disdain of those whose ways they ape ;
Crude sycophants around the feet of fame !

From their dull ways I hastened to escape.
Sure there were honest men in public life,
And this is all the creed they seemed to hold ;
To live their lives above its sordid strife,
To handle not its enervating gold.
So I went forth to search again and said :
“ Not in such places can the mind find rest,
I do but seek the living with the dead,”
And was uncomforted in my lone quest.

I sought in haunts of pleasure for my goal ;
“ Maybe,” I said, “ the Hedonite is sound,
And self-expression satisfies the soul,
And peace in sensuous rapture may be found.”
I sat at many a wisely chosen feast,
Laughing with Pleasure’s inconsiderate clan ;
And took delicate meats of fowl and beast,
And wine that maketh glad the heart of man.
But soon I fled the courts of joyless joy,
The loveless women who made trade of love,
Lest in their revelries I should destroy
Desire for the end for which I strove.
For in my mouth the evil things were sweet,
And luxury and lust were at my call ;
And I cried out for bitter herbs to eat,
And hyssop that I might be clean withal.

I sought again some impetus to live,
Consulting many a cheerful charlatan,

And many a soulful mystic who would give
Life's priceless secret, at a price, to man !
Then, growing tired, and puzzled what to do
To track the balm that makes the spirit whole,
I said, " I will not any more pursue
Th' inscrutable enigma of the soul."
I travelled from the busy town, away
To a sweet realm of woodlands and wild flowers
Where I had been one distant summer day,
And spent some oft-remembered tranquil hours :
And in that place unseeking did I find
What I so long had sought 'mid grievous ills:—
I saw *her* radiant in the fragrant wind,
A country maiden plucking daffodils !

I sought for peace : I found a peace indeed
That passes understanding, and a joy
That nerves to purpose high and daring deed
The spirit I had lusted to destroy.
Love ! Love that cares for nothing but its mate,
Love, uncontrollable and unashamed,
Love, laughing in the threatening face of Fate,
Love, that is measureless and single-aimed ;
Love, that illuminates the darkest way,
Love, that is fearless 'neath Death's Spartan
 ban ;
Love, that knows no division or decay,
Love, the beginning and the end of man !

A SONG OF THE HEATHER

(SNELSMORE COMMON)

OVER the heather,
Dancing together,
Over the carpet of purple and green,
Over the heather,
Certainly never
Happier lovers ever were seen.

Plucking the heather,
Binding together
Bundles and bundles of purple and green ;
Carrying heather,
Homeward together—
Happier lovers never were seen.

Do you ask whether,
When the sweet heather
Fades, and no longer is purple and green,
We'll be together ?
Yes, dear, for ever—
Happier lovers never were seen.

GREENHAM COMMON

(EVENING)

THE clouds went sailing by,
White ships on a sea of blue,
The hours went flying by
When I was loving you,
While the clouds went sailing by,
White ships on a sea of blue.

The breeze went dancing by,
Kissing the leafy trees,
I was kissing you, and I
Was happier than the breeze,
As it went dancing by,
And flirting with the trees.

That evening land and sea
And sky were all at peace,
There was peace at last for me,
Peace that can never cease,
Till the land and the sky make war,
And the sea has lasting peace.

LOVE'S TRANQUILLITY

DEAR, on a time I used to weep
Hot tears for the life I led ;
Pray for, and even purchase, sleep,
Wake, but to wish that I were dead.

I thought I knew what men called life,
And all the prizes it could give ;
I found its pathways strewn with strife,
And all its joys were fugitive.

And this resolve I made so deep—
I swore it as a holy oath :
To find the rest that is not sleep,
To track the ease that is not sloth.

I sought in vain within my mind,
And fruitlessly I searched the streets,
But all that I could ever find
Were dreams, and drugs, and sins, and sweets.

That sickened me ; and I would creep
Back to my room and curse my oath,
To find the rest that is not sleep,
To track the ease that is not sloth.

But now, my love, I seek no more
The boon that was so long delayed ;
No more I hear the frightening roar
Of beasts that made my soul afraid.

Whene'er our tranquil tryst we keep,
And with our kisses seal our troth ;
I know the rest that is not sleep,
I find the ease that is not sloth.

MY LADY'S EYES

WHENEVER I look at her eyes
Lit with love's maiden fire,
My soul is lost in awed surprise
That struggles with desire
Whenever I look at her eyes.

Whenever I look at her eyes
Lit with a roguish glee,
My mind to rumoured rivals flies,
I chafe impatiently
Whenever I look at her eyes.

Whenever I look at her eyes
Lit with a need divine,
They urge me to some enterprise
To make her wholly mine,
Whenever I look at her eyes.

Whenever I look at her eyes
Hopes, ardours, and alarms
Contend within me, I must rise
And take her in my arms
Whenever I look at her eyes.

Whenever I look at her eyes
I read in them a sign
Of settled love that never dies,
I know that she is mine
Whenever I look at her eyes.

MY LADY'S LAUGH

THERE is a seat in a secluded lane,
That branches off the beaten road to
Bath,
Where I have sat, and hope to sit again,
Telling my love droll tales to make her laugh.

Her laughter is as sweet as silver bells,
Ringing across a silent countryside ;
There is a timbre in her joy that tells
Secrets her shy affection fain would hide.

Ah, when her eyes are twinkling in their glee,
And merriment makes dimples in her cheeks,
And archly she comes nestling close to me,
I know the thought of which she never
speaks.

Reluctantly towards home our steps we turn,
And presently I leave her at her door,
But all night long I hear her laugh, and yearn
For times when we shall say "Good-night"
no more.

Meanwhile we shall frequent that silent lane,
That branches off the beaten road to Bath,
And on that rustic seat I'll tell again
Droll tales because I love my lady's laugh.

LOVE IN ABSENCE

MY love, I dream of you where'er I go
By day and night, always and every-
where,

It is the only bitterness I know—

The wakening to find you are not there,
I shower hot kisses on your absent face,

I tread the sunny lanes where we did fare,
And in your eyes your beauteous soul I trace,
Then smooth the sweet disorder of your hair.

But though by lands' expanse or oceans' tide
We may be parted, in our hearts we know
A oneness space can never overthrow,
A bond that distance never can divide.

INVITATION

COME, love, I will fashion a couch of white
roses,

A robe of red roses will I weave for you ;
We will rest where the ivy the tree-trunks
encloses,

From the rise of the moon to the fall of the
dew.

Come, and the stars shall keep watch o'er our
slumbers,

That the fragrance of night may be free from
alarms ;

No lightnings of longings, no lonely night
thunders,

Shall disturb your sweet sleep in your own
true love's arms.

Come, love, for too long have we borne un-
complaining

The night that is day and the day that is
night,

Come, there's joy in possession, there's glory
in gaining

The light that is darkness, the darkness that's
light.

Come, we will follow the sun in its setting
Down over the hills to the back of beyond,
To the realm of our roseate dreams' begetting,
To the rapture for which we have languished
and longed.

Come, love, I will fashion a couch of white
roses,
A robe of red roses will I weave for you,
Come rest in my arms on a pillow of posies
From the rise of the moon to the fall of the
dew.

RETURN

BACK to my love again !
How slowly pass the hours,
How long the miles, how distant town from town,
As from the North impatient I come down,
To those sweet home-shire bowers
Of woodlands and wild flowers,
Back to my love again.

Back to my love again !
Through counties black with mines and mills,
Through lowland stretches of the arid plain,
Needing my dear as much as it needs rain,
Parched for her kiss, that kills
Each wish but what she wills,
Back to my love again.

Back to my love again !
Soon, soon shall I be there,
Leaving behind all the noise of the world,
Through which for incredible hours we have
 whirled,
Back to the fragrant air,
Back to the grave of care,
Back to my love again.

LOVE'S PLAINT

I DO not pray at close of day
For virtue or for wealth,
God grant me this completest bliss,
My darling for myself.

These languid days in separate ways
Are crammed with chilly care,
These night desires that burn as fires
Are torturous to bear.

My lonely room is filled with gloom,
I smart 'neath terror's thong
The while I wait importunate—
How long, O Lord, how long? .

I plead in pain, I urge again
One boon that I require,
Deliver me from misery
Of impotent desire.

I do not pray at close of day
For virtue or for wealth,
God grant me this completest bliss,
My darling for myself.

THE GOAL

I AM come to my own at last,
I know it is good to live,
The days of despair are past,
And doubt is a fugitive ;
I am thrilled with a purpose high
In the die of love firm cast,
And the goal of my life is nigh ;
I am come to my own at last.

I am come to my own at last
After years of useless zeal,
My hope was fleeting fast,
Fate's wounds would never heal :
Now the sky is clear and blue,
Which was once so overcast :
I am come, dear Love, to you,
I am come to my own at last.

SOME OTHERS

THE SEVEN DOLOURS OF IRELAND

THERE is an isle set in the western sea,
Whose coasts are torn and split by waves
that roll
And break against the land incessantly,
As storms of sorrow beat upon her soul :
Around her, islands by the tides made waste,
Stand desolate for all the world to see,
And all her children know the bitter taste
Of the grim chalice of her destiny.

There is an isle where learned men of yore
Sowed seeds of truth that sank in friendly
earth,
And flourished and supplied the world with lore
Of subtle science and of holy mirth :
Minstrels and bards there were who harped and
sang,
And made the generous hearts that loved
them glad,
Until the moaning bell of fate outrang,
And they were silenced, and the land was sad.

There is an isle where faith was made a fault,
And penitence and prayer adjudged as crimes ;
Where on the mountain-side the people sought
Their harassed pastors in the penal times ;
The Mass was said while scouts with eager eyes
Kept guard about the Christian privilege,
Lest the most sacred of all mysteries
Should fall to mercenary sacrilege.

There is an isle where men of alien race
Were planted wickedly that they might kill
Its native culture, banish every trace
Of centuries of scholarship and skill ;
Their infamies were great and manifold,
Coarse hucksters they, who made the land
their mart,
Law left them free to steal the nation's gold
But could not give them power to sear its
heart.

There is an isle where men, who were denied
The elemental liberties of men,
Gathered, and armed, and tyrant hosts defied,
And pike and musket gleamed in many a glen ;
It seemed those stalwart heroes died in vain,
For alien force uphept the alien sway,
But in their sons their spirits lived again,
Have lived, and still are living on to-day.

There is an isle whose people have essayed
Brave contests for the freedom of her soil,
Where peasant patriots were not afraid
To fight for their poor heritage of toil ;
They shed no blood for vengeance, ease, or pay,
Through all the struggle of the barren years ;
They fought to usher in a brighter day,
To stem the current of their country's tears.

There is an isle whose craven sons within
Her own fair borders added to the might
Of her oppressors : through their bargaining
She lost in treachery what she gained in fight :
And yet this little isle is unresigned
Despite her dolours, almost past belief ;
Sad-eyed her sons, unshamed before mankind,
Stand, heritors of her immortal grief.

L'ENVOI

Hail ; Ireland hail ; thou land of sorrows, hail !
The dove of peace in thy blue skies hath
stayed,
Soon thou shalt know a joy that cannot fail,
And find a freedom that shall never fade.

THE SECRET

I MET Phil Rooney in the lane,
He was after hearing Mass,
I asked him did he know the name
Of a passing pretty lass.

He looked after her and then
He looked sagely up at me—
Then he took the road again
Whistling most provokingly.

* * *

I met Phil Rooney in the street
With that lass, he beckoned me,
And with undisguised conceit
“Missus Rooney, sir,” said he.

TO MARTIN SHAW

SINCE first you knew me as a surpliced boy,
And taught me chanting in a parish choir,
I have sought pleasure that would never cloy,
And stimulus for spiritual desire
In many places : I have ever found
My goal in that pure art that is your own ;
For the musician's realm is hallowed ground,
And peace is in the mellow organ's tone.

My lasting gratitude is yours for this—
That on the perilous threshold of my youth,
You taught me the delights of reverence,
And all the subtle sanctity of sense ;
That harmony is the approach to truth,
And melody the open road to bliss.

TO F. W.

WHEN we walk in and out the countryside,
I envy you the happiness you find
In storing all its features, side by side,
In the well-ordered chambers of your mind.
Where every bird is to be found, and when
It is upon its nest and when abroad ;
And all the tricks of rustic working-men
In search of " sport " their landlords' fields
afford ;
The thousand details of the largest farm,
And every mile through which the river wends,
Each living creature's fortress against harm—
These knowledges are at your finger-ends.

But when we have returned from tramp or stroll
I, pondering on the pleasures of the walk,
Envy you not your knowledges that are
The shell of natural phenomena ;
For I have ears for Nature's secret talk
Of passion and of peace that are her soul.

TO L. J. McQ.

COMRADE and critic, if I cannot reach
The goal to which you urge me, beckon on !
I know my voice as yet is but a screech ;
Some day it shall be lifted up in song ;
Then will I sing of realms that you know well,
Remote from aspiration's bitter mart ;
Then in melodious rapture will I tell
All that I owe to one poetic heart.

I am in rags ; you are in cloth of gold,
I pick some rhythmic crumbs up ; you have
wealth
Of inspiration worlds could never hold—
The Muses throw but coppers to myself.
Beckon me on, and some day we will meet
At a Parnassian banquet. I shall hide
Myself upon the very lowest seat,
Content and happy in that you preside.

CLOUDS

“ **E**VERY cloud is silver-lined ”
People say, but they are blind
To the clouds in every sky,
And I often wonder why ?

I said to the sky when it was blue
“ O cloudless sky, how I love you ! ”
And even while I gazed and spoke,
A great grey cloud appeared and broke.

I said to the sun one summer noon
“ For light and heat your bounty’s boon
I love you, sun ” ; but I spoke too loud,
And the sun went hiding behind a cloud.

“ Every cloud is silver-lined ”
People say, but they are blind
To the clouds in every sky,
And I often wonder why ?

THE KAISER

EMPEROR, whose lust unleashed the dogs
of war,

Whose shining fangs are at the throats of men,
When, drunk with blood thy beasts of prey
no more

Fulfil thy murderous purposes ; what then ?
Then shalt thou stand encircled and ensnared
By all those ravening legions as they rise
All quivering with appetite, prepared
To work on thee thy own atrocities.

Then in one ghastly moment shalt thou see
The hideous things thy vanity hath done,
Before thy monsters turn, and rending thee,
Bear down thy threatening shadow from the
sun.

LINES AT A CERTAIN SEANCE

IT is in vain they decorate the foul
With all the native garments of the fair,
No man can sit with Satan cheek by jowl
And fancy someone beautiful is there.
Women are here whose bodies are their trade,
Men who are lewd profaners of the bed,
And here is an apostate priest who said
Black Mass on the white body of a maid.

This psychic sensualism of the East
Fills me with loathing ; and a nameless
dread
Possesses me. The instinct of the beast
Triumphs in all this traffic with the dead.
I know the secret of these reeking holes,
I know the meaning of these poisonous lairs,
'Tis here men come to buy the Devil's wares
And pay for them with their immortal souls.

INSOMNIA

GOD send the dawn, for in this awful night
The darkness is a solid, clammy thing
That probes and mauls me, that my teeth can
bite,

And my hands touch and find it sickening.
I light the candles and their light doth make
More black the fearsome vault that is my
mind,

Wherein my thoughts do weirdly jig and shake
And crack, like bones tormented by the wind.
God send the dawn ! For I am stark and faint
Upon the rack I used to call my bed,
And if thou wilt not grant this piteous plaint,
God, in thy loving kindness strike me dead.

A WELCOME TO SPRING

LET us welcome in the Spring?
For it is a happy thing
When the winter fires go out,
And the lovers are about.

Let us welcome in the Spring,
Joining with the birds who sing
Songs no mortal man forgets
To the early violets.

All our pretty country misses
In the lanes will pout for kisses ;
All our boys both shy and daring
Gates and stiles with them be sharing.

Sure they will not always be
Capable of coquetry,
Marriage is a sorry thing—
Let us welcome in the Spring.

A QUERY

I MET a girl with big brown eyes
Hauntingly inquisitive ;
She asked me how would I advise
Such a pretty girl to live ?

I walked with her to Westminster
And she told me as we went
Of some affairs that troubled her,
And her disillusionment.

Pray, how could any man advise
Such a pretty girl to live,
Looking into her big eyes
Hauntingly inquisitive ?

This is the word I never said
To her there in Ashley Place :
“ A little girl is better dead
If she has a pretty face.”

TO SOME DECADENT POETS

RHYMSTERS who make their frowy lust
Their staple topic, sicken me,
There is good reason to distrust
Amorous heresiography.

The pure delights of argent love,
Need cleaner hearts and nobler pens
Than they possess who coop the dove
Of passion in lascivious dens.

It is not in the drony air
Of faint perfume and reckless ease,
That love can blossom fresh and fair
Yielding her chastest ecstasies.

In maiden hearts immaculate,
In honest manly breasts, her fire
Burns up the dross of fall and fate,
And banishes the gross desire.

Stand by, ye dull erotic crew,
Dabblers in jingles to the jade ;
Stand by for him who pities you—
The man who truly loves a maid.

TO SOME RHYMERS OF THE TOWN

POETS love to sing, I know,
The delights of rural life ;
Poets who themselves reside
Where an omnibus will take
Passengers to town to make
Calls that will the cash provide
For the needy rhymers' wife,
Or the girl that is in tow.

Poets wont to haunt Soho
Any evening after six,
Drowsy bedlings who at noon
Rise, and spend the afternoon
Contemplating night-time tricks—
Really they are very slow.

Never be it mine to chide
Failures who have never shone,
Egotists, whose one relief
Is the pity of their pride.
I would rather at their side
Drink to their absurd belief
In the praise they never won,
In their unborn chance that died.

It is bad enough to be
Constitutionally prone,
To write what one thinks is verse,
When a paper, now and then,
Deigns to utilize one's pen.
But to live but to rehearse
Lines that never will be known,
Is a doleful destiny.

Come, then, poets of the town,
Spend an hour or two with me,
Doing what you love to do :
We will go up West and dine,
You shall have your full of wine,
And all that I ask of you,
Is my auditors to be
When we have our dinner down.

What I have to say is this :
“ Gentlemen, you much mistake,
What is needed if you would
Write and find an audience.
All your lives are a pretence,
But pretension never could
Catch the lilting of a lake,
Or a wood's wild mysteries.

“ Do you think that wearing hair
Long or short can help a man ?

Do you think that any pose
Can disguise a banal mind,
Or strike all the critics blind ?
Not a man of you but knows,
That a coarse barbarian
Sometimes can be debonair.

“ Leave the sunsets and the seas,
With the valleys and the glens,
To the writers who can write,
Of such things as intimates ;
Load your barques with heavier freights,
To the town your lays indite,
Search its gutters with your pens,
Make of men your melodies.

“ Come, now, we will leave Soho,
And I beg, if you *must* write,
Write about the life you live,
Write about the things you see,
All the farce and tragedy
Of the goals for which men strive
All around you day and night
In Chelsea or in Pimlico.”

CREDO VIDERE BONA DOMINI IN
TERRA VIVENTIUM

I DO not gaze with hopeful, hopeless eyes
To heaven for my bliss,
For I can never know its ecstasies
In such a world as this.

I do not yearn to pass those jasper gates,
As yet I know not how
Entrance is gained ; my tired spirit waits
For heaven here and now.

So that, foretasting, I may be made fit
For the celestial feast ;
And purge my soul and drive from out of it
All that is of the beast.

And this belief it is that strengthens me
When I am over-awed ;
In this land of the living I shall see
The good things of the Lord.

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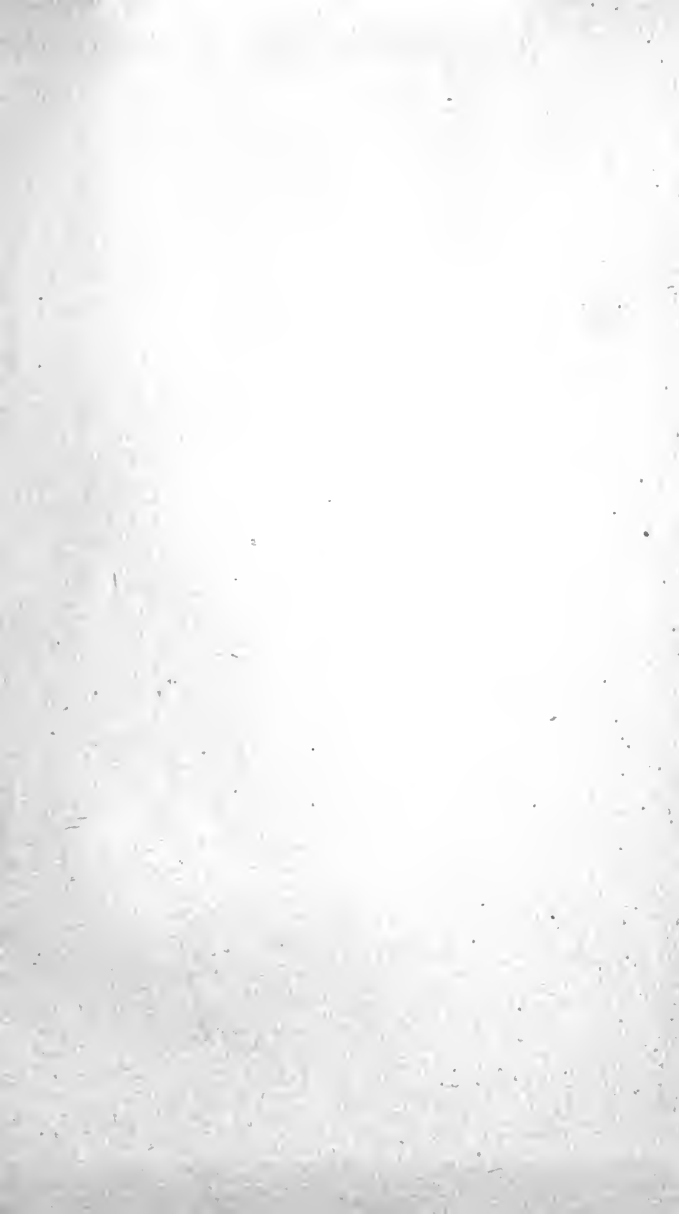
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